

**Article XV: E-Mail, Internet & Computer Resources Policy**

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**Section 1: Purpose**

This policy covers the use of electronic technology resources belonging to, or used by Alexander County. It includes, but is not limited to, all computer systems, software, network resources, fax machines, cell phones and internet resources. All technology resources owned by Alexander County are County property and are in place to enable the County to provide its services in a timely and efficient manner. This is the primary function of these resources and any activity or action that interferes with this purpose is prohibited. Because technology systems are constantly evolving, Alexander County requires its employees to use a common sense approach to the rules set forth below, complying not only with the letter, but also the spirit, of this policy.

**Section 2: Definitions**

Electronic technology resources: include, but are not limited to, host computers, **files** servers, routers, firewalls, switches, hubs, modems, workstations, stand alone computers, laptops, printers, scanners, software, internal or external data communication networks, cell phones and fax machines.

Users: as used in this policy, refers to all employees, elected and appointed officials, independent contractors and other person or entities accessing or using any of Alexander County's electronic technology resources.

E-mail: is the ability to compose and distribute messages, documents, files, software, or images by electronic means over a phone line or network connection. This includes internal and external e-mail and instant messaging systems.

Software: is the computer programs that reside on any type computer or electronic devise including equipment control systems to perform a desired function. It encompasses programs provided by the manufacturer, a vendor or developed by in-house staff.

Network-resources: include the hardware and software necessary to connect computers and resources into a communication system.

Internet: is the worldwide network of computer servers that allows access to the public through the use of special languages.

**Section 3: Scope**

This policy shall apply to all persons, whether employees, independent contractors or agents of the County, or otherwise, who use the County's electronic technology resources, excluding public access users utilizing designated public access computers. All persons using Alexander County's electronic technology resources must comply with all software licenses, copyright laws, and all other State and Federal laws governing intellectual properties.

Authorization to use the County's e-mail systems and access the Internet will be granted by the County Manager, or designee, on an as- needed basis.

#### **Section 4: Ownership and Privacy Expectations**

All technology resources and all information transmitted by, received from and stored on Alexander County systems are the property of Alexander County and as such, are subject to inspection by County officials. **Employees using the electronic technology resources of Alexander County for communication DO NOT HAVE AN EXPECTATION OR RIGHT OF PRIVACY.** Alexander County has the right to audit and monitor the information on all systems, electronic mail and information stored on computer systems or media, without advanced notice. This might include investigation of theft, unauthorized disclosure of confidential business or proprietary information, personal abuse of the system or monitoring workflow and productivity.

- a. E-mail created, sent, or received through the use of any County owned resource is property of Alexander County, not its employees.
- b. Users can have no expectations or rights of privacy in anything they create, send, store, or receive on any County owned electronic technology resource. The recipient of a message may forward it to any number of other parties. E-mail may become evidence in legal cases. A good rule is to compose e-mail with the expectation that it will become public.
- c. Do not use e-mail for confidential communications without approval by the County Manager or his designee.
- d. The County owns software that will be used to monitor Internet sites visited.
- e. County Information Technology personnel will be the System Administrator for all servers attached to the County Network.
- f. Because the Internet is used as a part of a work activity, the County's code of conduct applies to network activities as well. Therefore, the procedures in the policy are an extension of the Alexander County's Personnel Policy.

#### **Section 5: Policy Violations**

The following are example of violations of this policy but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Solicit or advertise for personal or commercial gain;
- b. Solicit or advertise for outside organizations, religious, charitable or political causes; (Exceptions may be made for organizations such as United Way and other like agencies with prior approval from the Human Resource Director
- c. Create, send, view, fax, store messages and/or websites that may reasonably be regarded as offensive, obscene, disruptive, illegal, fraudulent, profane, embarrassing or libelous. These include information that may be construed as harassment or disparagement of others based on their race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability or religious or political beliefs. Users encountering or receiving such material should immediately report the incident to their Supervisor.
- d. To send or receive by any means copyrighted materials, proprietary information or similar materials without express authorization from the author;

- e. Send or forward e-mail or fax materials either internally or externally, without identifying themselves clearly and accurately. Anonymous or pseudonymous posting is expressly forbidden.
- f. Attempt to access another employee's e-mail without permission;
- g. Use another employee's access code to view, alter, or distribute information without the express authorization of that employee.
- h. Use County electronic technology resources to access and use sensitive or confidential information in a manner not originally intended;
- i. Load employee owned or non-County purchased software on County electronic technology resources, whether intended for legitimate business matters, personal purposes, or amusement; this includes shareware, freeware, personal software, stealth ware (programs that hide the user's use of the computer) or Internet distributed programs.
- j. Load County owned software on County electronic technology resources without clearance from the Information Technology Department; this includes shareware, freeware, personal software or Internet distributed programs.
- k. Alter, add or remove any County technology resource without clearance and approval from the Information Technology Department;
- l. Perform System Administrator functions on servers attached to the County network;
- m. Download files from any source and not scan for viruses; this includes files obtained as e-mail attachments or by any other file transfer mechanism. It is the responsibility of County employees to take prudent steps to prevent the introduction or propagation of viruses.
- n. Use electronic resources in any illegal, malicious or inappropriate manner;
- o. Transmit confidential personnel information using E-mail systems or the fax machine.
- p. Use of personal software without the approval of Information Technology Director.

If Alexander County determines that an employee has used electronic technology resources in a manner that violates this policy or other State or Federal law, the violation may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, as outlined in Article X of the Alexander County's Personnel Policy.

## **Section 6: Personal Use**

Personal use of Alexander County's electronic technology resources is allowed with the following restrictions:

- a. Employees should be aware that personal use of a County technology resource is still subject to all rules in this policy including inspection and monitoring.
- b. There must be no cost to the County.
- c. Use must be conducted on an employee's own time during lunch and breaks.
- d. Use must not interfere with other employees performing their jobs or undermine the use of County resources for official business.
- e. Use of County's electronic technology resources for operating a personal business is prohibited.
- f. Individuals who are not employees of Alexander County (including an employee's family or friends) are not allowed to use the County's electronic technology resources.

- g. Personal use of the County's electronic technology resources neither expresses nor implies sponsorship endorsement by Alexander County.
- h. Sending or forwarding of jokes, chain letters or large images is prohibited
- i. All personal use of County electronic technologies must not be used in any other manner that may be construed as harassment or discrimination.

#### **Section 7: Appropriate Use**

At all times when an employee is using Alexander County electronic technology resources, he or she is representing the County. Use the same good judgment in all resource use that you would use in written correspondence or in determining the "appropriate conduct". Alexander County employees are expected to use County provided electronic technology resources responsibly and professionally.

Alexander County is not responsible for the actions of individual users. This policy may be amended or revised periodical as the need arises. Failure to follow guidelines as set forth in this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.